

Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

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*A message from
Congressman Elijah E. Cummings*



It is both a privilege and honor to represent you in the United States Congress. I will continue outreach efforts to further inform you of legislative action in Congress and its impact. I welcome your advice. Government "by the people" is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.

*Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress*

SECOND SESSION OPENS WITH

**Congressman Elijah
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ACTION ON EDUCATION AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM: As soon as the second session of the 107th Congress convened, Congressman Cummings took action to make higher education more affordable and curb the influence of special interests.

Education: Since jobs are not as plentiful as in the dot-com boom years, many Americans are deciding to pursue further education to upgrade their skills. In addition, young people are attending college in higher numbers than 30 years ago.

The high cost of college tuition, books and other related costs often forces students and their families to take out student loans.

To ensure the increased availability of affordable loans, 372 Members of Congress, including Congressman Cummings, voted for S. 1762 that stabilizes interest rates.

"This legislation will help millions of students and families afford the rising costs of higher education," Congressman Cummings said.

Under the measure, the current student loan interest rate index, which now provides the lowest interest rate in the Stafford Loan Program's history, would be extended to 2006. Interest rates for loans received by students after July 1, 2006, would be fixed at 6.8 percent. Interest rates on loans taken out by parents would be fixed at 7.9 percent

"The passage of this legislation will preserve the stability of the Higher

Education Act of 1965, which has enabled 50 million Americans of all ages to pursue higher education," Congressman Cummings said.

Because the House passed the Senate version of the bill, S. 1762 will go straight to the President.

Campaign Finance Reform: The faltering of energy giant Enron returned the crucial issue of campaign finance reform to the forefront of the national agenda. On Thursday, Jan. 24, Congressman Cummings joined a bi-partisan House coalition to successfully demand action on the Shays-Meehan legislation (H.R. 2356).

Congressman Cummings was an original co-signer of the discharge petition that removed the Shays-Meehan bill from the control of a committee that had delayed consideration of this important legislation by the entire House.

If enacted into law, the Shays-Meehan Act would shut down the soft money system that gives wealthy special interests undue access to government officials. The proposed legislation would also limit deceiving issue ads that take over the airways.

"This is an important day for democracy and for the American people," Congressman Cummings said.

Response to the State of the Union Address

Congressman Cummings responded to the State of the Union address by commending President Bush for his forthright statement of the nation's goals.

"President Bush and I are on the same page with respect to homeland defense," Congressman Cummings declared.

The Congressman also voiced strong support for bi-partisan efforts to strengthen education, expand access to healthcare, increase minority home ownership, provide greater job and pension security and create a Medicare prescription drug plan for senior citizens.

"The bi-partisan challenge for both the President and the Congress will be finding a way to address all of these national priorities within the constraints posed by the federal budget deficits that are projected for the next few years," Congressman Cummings observed. "The American people expect us to work together to meet that challenge; and I intend to do so."

Honoring Dr. King's Dedication to Service

"If Dr. King were here with us today, he would be walking with us in this movement to save lives," Congressman Cummings said from the pulpit of Douglass Memorial Community Church, where he was the keynote speaker at a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day program.

At the event, Congressman Cummings applauded the leadership of Baltimore's African American clergy in the local public health effort against AIDS. More than 80 percent of Maryland AIDS patients are now people of color. Nationally, AIDS has become the number one cause of death among African Americans, ages 22-44.

Following the program, the ministers led more than 50 people to be tested in the mobile health van parked outside the church. Maryland residents can obtain information about free testing in their own communities by calling toll free, 1-800-638-6252.

"You are leading by example," Congressman Cummings noted. "By early testing with a simple, painless cheek swab, people can learn whether they have contracted the HIV virus and, if they have, obtain the treatment that can prolong their lives."

Important Dates

Fri. 2/8/02: Glaucoma Screening, 740 Poplar Grove Road, Baltimore, MD. Time: 10 a.m. to Noon. *For more information, call, (410) 496-2010*

February: Black History Month

Health Insurance for All

"Why not everyone?" That was the question that Congressman Cummings, along with health care leaders and community activists, asked in calling for national action to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance.

At a Jan. 14th press conference held at the Edmondson Village "UniversityCare" Clinic, Congressman Cummings was joined by Maryland Health Secretary Georges Benjamin, M.D., University of Maryland at Baltimore President David Ramsey and Dr. Clyde Evans, Vice-President of the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC), for a preview of a national campaign to increase the number of Americans who can afford insurance. The campaign will pledge to advance the cause of more than 43 million Americans (including 667,000 Marylanders) who currently lack affordable health care coverage.

"Dr. Ramsey and his health care colleagues are asking the right question," Congressman Cummings declared. "Why doesn't every man, every woman and, especially, every child in America have affordable health insurance today?"

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During the economic slow-down that intensified after September 11, the issue of continued health insurance for displaced workers has been central to the debate over competing economic stimulus plans, an issue that Congressman Cummings will continue to raise in Congress.

"Far too many displaced workers now lack health insurance," the Congressman observed. "Any true 'economic stimulus' package must assure continued health care benefits for those Americans who once worked for small companies without any assurance of continued health insurance, as well as for those who now cannot afford the high cost of health insurance."

During the event, the speakers agreed that wealth, income and, especially, employment are major factors that separate those who have health insurance coverage from those who do not. For example, essential preventive health care often remains out of reach for the 15 out of every 100 Baltimore residents who lack any form of health insurance. Continued expansion of the number of insured children will remain a central goal of the national campaign.

"We must expand federal support for the State Children's Health Insurance Program that the Congress enacted in 1997," Congressman Cummings declared. "To accomplish this, all of us must support outreach programs like the University of Maryland-based **"Maryland Covering Kids"** campaign that is working to assure that all eligible children have insurance coverage."

